



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

**75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901**

**OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR**

The Honorable John McCain
United States Senate
SR-241 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCain:

Thank you for your letter of May 25, 2016 to Administrator Gina McCarthy on behalf of your constituents in Dewey-Humboldt, Arizona regarding EPA's activities and schedule for the Iron King Mine/Humboldt Smelter Superfund Site. Your letter was referred to the EPA Pacific Southwest Region because our office has the lead role in the site's cleanup.

EPA staff provided an update on our progress on the investigation and cleanup of the site in a February 2016 letter to the town council, followed by an April 2016 newsletter to local residents. We set forth our priority of our efforts: first, clean up mine-related contamination in residential yards and then focus on the contamination at the former mine and smelter and non-residential drainages above the Agua Fria River.

The remedial investigation work at the site conducted by EPA in 2009-2010 was supplemented with significantly more investigation activities to identify and evaluate cleanup alternatives for the site. We have now completed that work and anticipate releasing a revised, expanded remedial investigation report by fall 2016.

In 2006 and 2011, EPA conducted initial cleanups of lead and arsenic-contaminated soils at a total of 20 residential yards in town. Beginning in fall 2016, we will work with town leaders and residents to plan for additional soil cleanups at 18-30 residences, which we plan to conduct in 2017.

We will also continue our work to evaluate cleanup alternatives for the non-residential areas affected by contaminated mine tailings. We anticipate completion of the feasibility study report by the end of 2017 and by the end of 2018, after a public comment period, selection of a cleanup alternative.

We share your concern about private and public drinking water for residents of Dewey-Humboldt. Our data indicate that the former mine and smelter are not impacting the drinking water. However, local groundwater has variable natural levels of arsenic and other metals. We are working with the state health and environmental agencies to encourage residents with private wells to test their water and implement treatment if arsenic levels are above federal safe drinking water standards.

I have asked our Congressional Liaison to reach out to your staff to set up a call to brief them on EPA's work at the site and to answer any questions they may have. We trust that this information is responsive to your request and serves the needs of your constituents in Dewey-Humboldt. We remain committed to our work at the site and to working with the town and residents throughout the process. If we can be of further assistance, please contact me or refer your staff to our Congressional Liaison, Brent Maier, at (415) 947-4256.

Sincerely,

 16 June 2016
Alexis Strauss
Acting Regional Administrator